

Peasant Movements in Colonial India

North Bihar 1917-1942

Australian National University
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North Bihar 1917-1942

Stephen Henningsham



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To the Memory of

MERLE FLORENCE GREER, 1914-1979

ABBREVIATIONS

AAR	Annual Administrative Report
AICCP	All-India Congress Committee Papers
BSA	Bihar State Archives
C	Collection
f	file
F	Fasli
FMP	Freedom Movement Papers
FR	Fortnightly Report
FR (1)	Fortnightly Report for first half of month
FR (2)	Fortnightly Report for second half of month
G	General Department, Raj Darbhanga Archives
GGB	Government of Great Britain
GB	Government of Bihar
GBEN	Government of Bengal
GBO	Government of Bihar and Orissa
GOI	Government of India
HP	Home Political Department [of the Government of India]
IOL	India Office Library
JPNP	Jay Prakash Narayan Papers
KW	Keep With (a file)
L	Law Department, Raj Darbhanga Archives
LR	Land Revenue Proceedings
NAI	National Archives of India
NML	Nehru Memorial Library
PP	Rajendra Prasad Papers
PS	Political Special Department [of the Government of Bihar (and Orissa)]
RDA	Raj Darbhanga Archives
WBA	West Bengal Archives

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Abbreviations	vii
Acknowledgements	x
List of Diagrams and Tables	xii
Maps: 1. North Bihar: districts and subdivisions	xlv
2. North Bihar: towns and villages	xv
INTRODUCTION	1
1 EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY NORTH BIHAR	3
2 ANTI-PLANTER PROTEST, 1917-1923	36
3 SWAMI VIDYANAND'S MOVEMENT, 1919-1920	70
4 THE NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT, 1920-1923	90
5 THE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT, 1930-1934	109
6 THE KISAN SABHA MOVEMENT, 1936-1939	139
7 THE QUIT INDIA REVOLT, 1942	170
8 CONCLUSION	196
Appendix: The Darbhanga Raj archives	201
Notes	208
Bibliography	259
Glossary	273
Index	276

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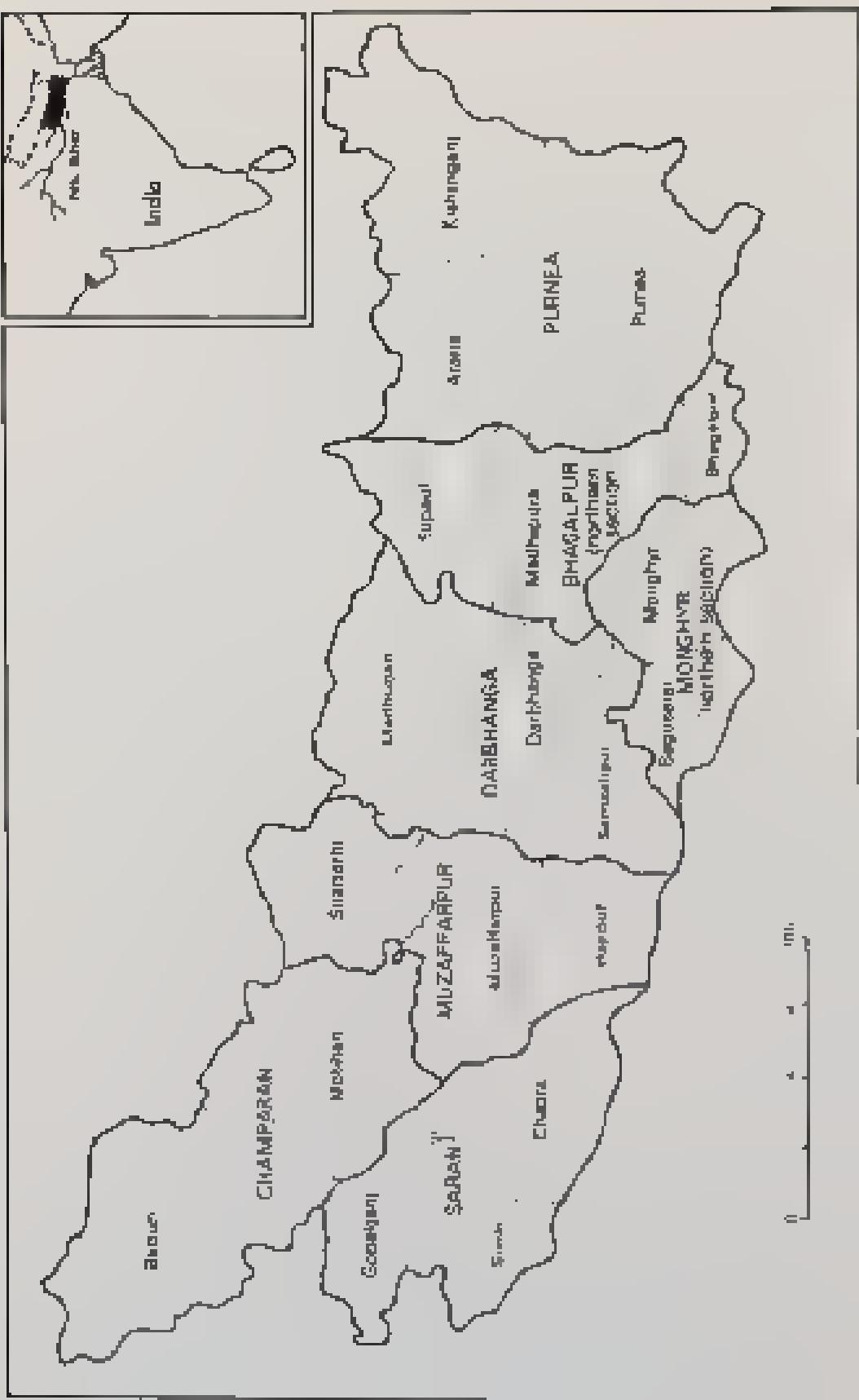
LIST OF TABLES

	<i>Page</i>
1.1 Community and Caste groups in north Bihar, circa 1900	9
1.2 Income and Expenditure (1927-28 Budgets) per 1,000 inhabitants of each province of British India	18
1.3 Expenditure (1927-28 Budgets) on administrative services per 1,000 inhabitants of each province of British India	21
1.4 Ratio of people to police and cost of police in provinces of British India, 1929	26
1.5 Population and population density of North Bihar, 1881-1951	29
2.1 Average indigo prices, 1894-96, 1897-99 and 1904	42
2.2 Area under indigo in Champaran 1895-96 to 1914-15	49
4.1 Occupations of Bihar delegates to the Allahabad Congress Session, 1910	93
4.2 Electoral turnout in 1920 Bihar Legislative Assembly Elections	96
6.1 Primary produce and commodity prices, 1928 and 1936	140
6.2 Rent Suits in Bihar, 1928-1940	142
6.3 Formula for the restoration of <i>bakast</i> lands, 1938	154
7.1 Official wholesale prices for rice and gram, 1941-45	172
7.2 Collective fines imposed and realised in north Bihar to end of November 1942 and February 1943 (amounts in Rupees)	186

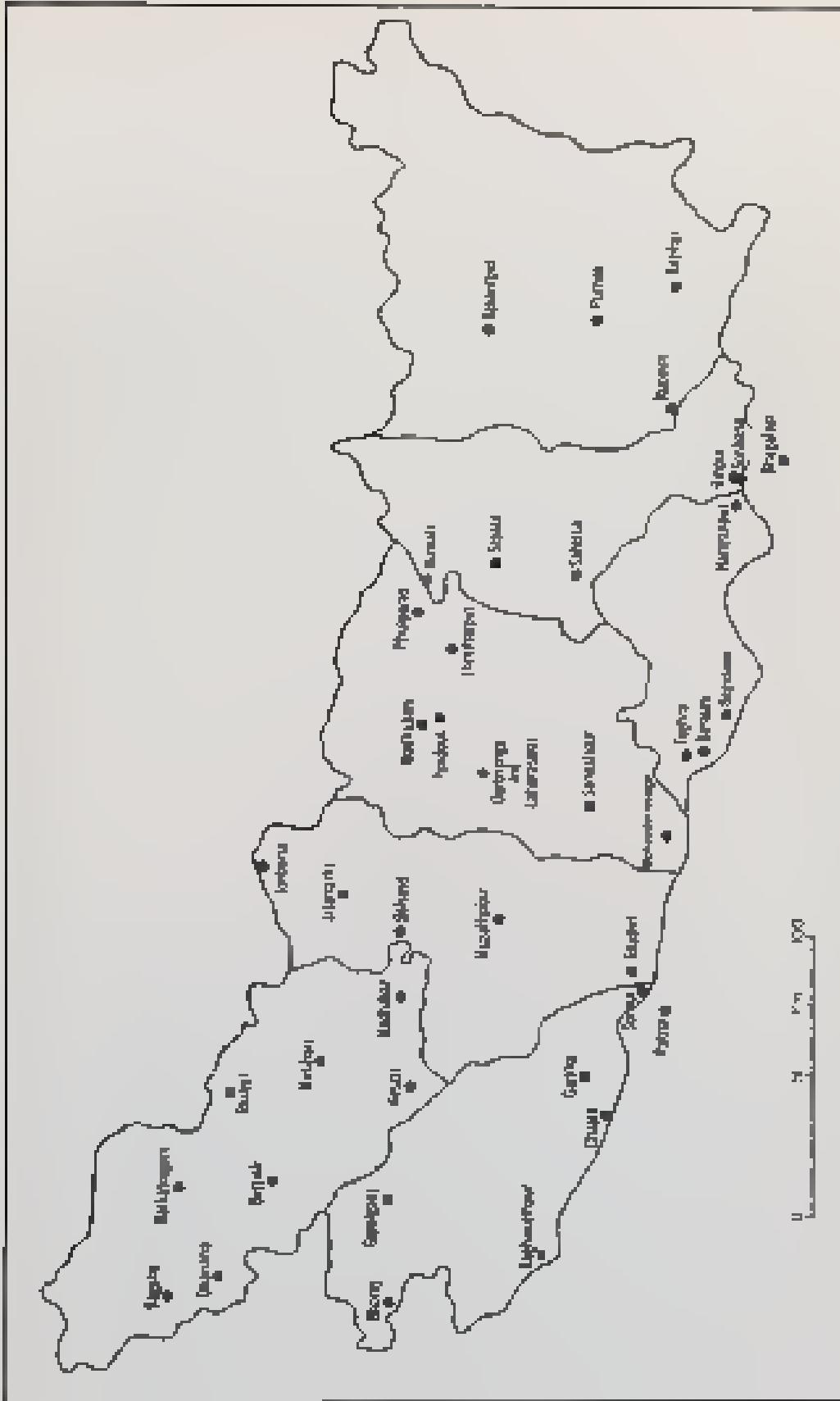
LIST OF DIAGRAMS

	<i>Page</i>
1.1 Social structure in north Bihar, circa 1900	11
3.1 Administrative structure of the Darbhanga Raj	147

Map 1. North Bihar, Districts and Subdivisions



Map 2. North Bihar : Towns and Villages



INTRODUCTION

In August 1942 a revolt erupted throughout India, reaching its peak in the region of north Bihar. In north Bihar the rebels tore up railway lines, demolished bridges, and attacked the British and their allies. At Rupauli in Purnia district they burnt three policemen alive in their station house. At Mankurab in Muzaffarpur district they killed five British soldiers and an Anglo-Indian civilian. The north Bihar authorities found it necessary to concentrate their forces in the towns and only regained control of the countryside through the deployment of a substantial military force.

The 1942 revolt was the sixth major peasant movement to occur in north Bihar within the quarter-century beginning in 1917. The anti-planter movement of 1917-23 and Swami Vivekanand's campaign of 1919-20 were critical of aspects of the region's agrarian system. In contrast the non-cooperation movement of 1920-21 and the civil disobedience campaigns of 1930-31 challenged the framework of British rule rather than the structure of agrarian relations which provided its foundation. In 1936-39 the kisan sabha (peasant association) movement raised criticisms of the institution of zamindari landholding, which formed the core of the agrarian system.

In an impoverished and rigidly patriarchal society the mobilisation of the peasantry offered an opportunity for the emergence of a radical challenge to the social order. This opportunity seemed particularly great in August 1942, with the temporary collapse of the law and order apparatus of the colonial state. Yet the peasants did not challenge the social order, neither in August 1942 nor during any of the five earlier movements. Why, in the 1917-42 period, did no radical challenge to the social order develop? Why did the peasants of north Bihar seek merely to reform existing social and political arrangements instead of attempting to transform the social structure to bring about a more equitable distribution of wealth and power?

the author's name, the date of the letter, and the subject matter. The letters are arranged in chronological order, starting from the earliest letter at the top and ending with the latest letter at the bottom. The letters are written in a cursive hand, which makes them difficult to read. However, the author has provided a transcription of each letter, which is included in the document. The transcription is written in a clear, legible font, and it includes the date and subject matter of each letter. The author has also provided a brief summary of the content of each letter, which is included in the document.

transform the social order.

CHAPTER 1

EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY NORTH BIHAR

North Bihar was a land of contrasts. On one hand, it was a land of great poverty and backwardness. The people were ignorant, illiterate, and lived in primitive conditions. They had little access to modern amenities like electricity, running water, and medical facilities. On the other hand, it was a land of rich natural resources, particularly agriculture. The soil was fertile, and there was a abundance of rainfall. This made it possible for the people to grow a variety of crops, including rice, wheat, maize, and pulses. The people were hardworking and resourceful, and they used traditional methods to cultivate their land. They also had a strong sense of community, and worked together to support each other. Despite its poverty, North Bihar had a vibrant culture, with a rich tradition of folk music, dance, and art.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, North Bihar was a semi-autonomous state under the British Raj. The Mughals had ruled the region for centuries before the British came, and they had left behind a rich cultural legacy. The people of North Bihar were descendants of these Mughals, and they had adopted many of their customs and traditions. They spoke a dialect of Hindi called Bhojpuri, which was heavily influenced by Persian and Arabic. The state had a unique administrative system, with a central government in Patna and smaller districts run by local governors. The economy was largely agricultural, with a focus on rice cultivation. The state was known for its produce, particularly rice, which was exported to other parts of India and even abroad.

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collection of land revenue. But the stability of this basis was threatened because the pressure of population growth on a sluggish agrarian economy was increasing the pattern of the unresisted occurrence of conflict. In this chapter the social structure in north Bihar is described, conflict and its control are discussed. The framework of British rule is examined and the effects of colonialism on the region as a whole and economy are discussed.

1

In the early twentieth century north Bihar had a overwhelmingly agrarian economy and society.¹ Less than 3 per cent of the population was urban and just over half of every five of them depended directly on agriculture for their livelihood. Land provided the chief resource and an individual's standing depended upon his ownership. Within the 20,000 or so villages where the vast majority of north Bihar lived, there were three main strata. Within the villages three social levels can be distinguished, albeit with imprecise boundaries. At the top were zamindars and rajas and rich peasants. Beneath them were middle peasants and at the bottom were poor peasants.²

The poor peasants were characteristically low caste Hindus, or low status Dalits in a despised area of 20 per cent of the population. The poor peasants can be defined by their possession of insufficient land on which subsistence cultivation that is to say they tenanted wholly or partly in the sale of their labour. They included sharecroppers, short term tenants, fully occupancy tenants, and unresigned labourers. They also incorporated wage labourers and fisherfolk, who characteristically combined their occupations with subsistence cultivation and with agricultural labour.

The middle peasants generally came from middle and low castes and comprised some 40 per cent of the population. Their defining characteristic was control of sufficient land generally as occupancy tenants but occasionally as petty zamindars, to provide subsistence through the use of family labour, thus freeing them from the necessity to

get things about themselves. I wanted to do more and more to expand my horizons.

After the main migration and the first few birds
arrived I saw many others in the same area.
I think they may have been released from the Kingbird colony which
was probably high above it, excepting the few birds which had
come from the south. The first bird was a
tiny, juvenile, tail-free bird of possibly a
juvenile, or even a female, all black.

The members of the Legislative Assembly were
and are to take it as their duty to do their best
to make every possible and just work to let a
variety of business prosper in the State and
the said State by a large number of
representatives and the rest of the Members of the Assembly
the Legislature better known and better known
of all the world that the said State is a
State of the Union very greatly. However whenever they
themselves are satisfied that said State is a good and
suitable for such Measures as to let the members
well communicated by one another help because the said
members of the Legislature will be engaged however
the members of the said Assembly as soon as
engaged between the present of a large number of
persons in the State the said State can stand with
good order and tranquility. However the power
of the State in the said State is that of a President of a
city. The members of the said Assembly
are to be engaged in the said State and
through the said State of the said State
and as a regular and punctual the rest from the State
of Darbhanga.⁴

Belonging to a particular estate is allied with the village caste; the members quarrel over the extent of land and other rights and were as well known to each other as the caste people. The members also are ruled by a strict contract between master lords and serfs. Nevertheless as high caste men and as owners of land and labor the members of the estate has common interests against those outside the village society.

They also occupied a curious position in relation to those who held power outside the world of the villages. The chief power of the members of the village was limited to their immediate locality. To exert influence beyond their village they needed to forge alliances with the rulers of other villages and to interact with the great landlords and the urban bourgeoisie and administrative elite.

Thus if the world of the villages was a group of great landed estates, these were headed by a few young chiefs who had by now acquired much wealth. Their future plotters' status meant that in contrast to their parents it was not the zamindars that the right to their properties had been held together through inheritance. The head of a great estate was known as a Maharan, or the archanga Ra, or tenth son of landed magnates that had come together in the wake of the Marathas' conversion to the religious community of Hinduism. Rameshwar Singh's property covered some 24000 square miles, which was about 10 percent of the total area of North Bihar. He was well received from and rents amounted to one of approximately Rs 4,000/- he paid 10 percent of this sum as land revenue and less off the produce of a certain, and spent another 3 to 5 percent on the administration of his fiefdom and its spread over a wide area. The remainder was augmented by the proceeds from estates in industry, undertakings and real estate. formed a substantial sum which taken together built up a Maratha 'ancient line'.

The Maratha of Iar was a landlord much like the others had in Barhargarh district and his properties in the districts of Muzaffarpur, North Bihar, and Champaran and so on. And the other great landlords the Mahara of Jharkhand, the ruler of the river bank of Baran district, a relative from the Maharan of Jharkhand, the Mahara of Jharkhand and his son the zamindar of Mukuban owned a small fief in the district of Champaran. The Marathas of Jharkhand and Bihar employed assessants to run their estates, whereas the other great landlords leased out, on a long term basis, the right to cultivate their lands to tenant farmers or the jahadars. Generally these farmers were small peasants and rich peasants, but in Champaran they also included European indigo planters.

Also outside the world of the villages were the towns of north Bihar. Less than 3 per cent of the population lived in the towns, which were sleepy backwaters rather than dynamic centres of growth. Patna the nearest large urban centre and itself scarcely a thriving metropolis, lay south of the broad expanse of the Ganges. The population of the towns consists of professionals, government servants, bankers, merchants, shopkeepers, artisans and unskilled labourers. The professionals and government servants came from high caste backgrounds & had kinship and mutual interest ties with the landlords and the rich peasants. The bankers & larger merchants came from the Marwari and other Hindu trading communities and underwrote the moneylending activities of small land lords and rich peasants. Muslims constituted the majority of the smaller shopkeepers and artisans, while the unskilled workers were generally low caste or Harijan. For a schematic representation of the structure of North Bihar society, please refer to Diagram I, page 4.

II

In North Bihar grave inequality in the distribution of property provided potential for the rise of tension and the emergence of conflict, but this inequality also created the relations of dependence which knit society together "In the villages the small landlords and the rich peasants controlled most of the land - in consequence they dominated the grain market, controlled the supply and distribution of credit and decided the agrarian labourers employment prospects and their wages & working conditions. Poor peasants were at the beck and call of rich peasants and small landlords. Through their possessors who had a few plots of land, the peasants had more independence but they were generally trapped within the credit and grain lending networks operated by those above them at the same time.

These relations of dependence were maintained through the caste system which had a profound and very unequal population, and the caste hierarchy maintained itself and was reinforced by the landlord aristocracy of the upper castes and a lower one & subcaste in the following consisted of Musammi, which made up 1 per

DIAGRAM 1.1

Social Structure in North Bihar, circa 1900

Agricultural Occupations	Non-Agricultural Occupations
The great landlords (high caste)	
European indigo planters	
The village elite: small landlords and rich peasants (high caste)	Lawyers, teachers, doctors and other professionals, money-lenders and big traders (high and middle caste)
Middle peasant occupancy tenants and some petty traders (middle and low caste)	Artisans and small traders (middle and low caste)
Poor peasants dwarf- holders, sharecroppers and labourers (low caste, Adivasi and Harijan)	Servants (low caste)
	Scavengers (Harijan)

cent of the population.⁴ A small number of Muslims were notable as large zamindars, while the rest of the community were dispersed throughout village society.⁵ For information on the size of the region's main caste and community groups, please refer to table 1.1.

TABLE 1.1

Caste and Community Groups in North Bihar, 1901Percentage of Population**a) Hindu Groups**Higher Caste*

Bhumihar	4.6
Brahman	4.7
Kayasth	1.4
Rajput	4.9
Total, Higher Caste Groups	15.6

Middle Caste

Koeri	4.8
Kurmi	3.0
Yadav	12.0
Total, Middle Caste Groups	19.8

Lower Caste Groups

(including Harijan groups)

Chamer	4.1
Dhanuk	3.0
Dusadh	5.0
Hajam	1.4
Kalwar	1.1
Kamar	1.3
Kandu	2.4
Kewat	1.2

Percentage of PopulationLower Caste Groups (Cont'd)

Kumbhar	1.1
Mauah	2.2
Musahar	2.6
Namuya	1.8
Tanti	2.3
Feb	3.0

Other groups (all less than one per cent of the total population) 15.4

Total Lower Caste and Harijan Groups. 47.9

Total Hindus 83.3

b, Non Hindu Groups

Muslim 16.1

Miscellaneous (including Adivasis, Brahmins, Budhists, Christians and others) 0.6

Total of all Groups. 100

Source Census of India 1901, Provincial tables.

Figures adjusted to discount south gangetic portions of Monghyr and Bhagalpur districts

* Hindu groups are designated as higher, middle or lower caste in terms of their economic well being, political influence and social status. In most instances a high correlation existed between level of wealth, degree of influence and social rank. The Kavastis form a partial exception, but they are listed here as a 'higher

caste because their wealth and power, based on land holding and on their caste & status, were more than compensated for their relatively low ritual status.

The ideology of the caste system fully sanctioned political initiatives among high caste groups. In its early presented society as it really & unchangeably is to the individual and insisted that the only legitimate course open to the individual was to accept without comment his position in the social order and to fit the status and obligations imposed by that position. This ideology had been made concrete in an elaborate etiquette, say today behaviour which, Barrington Moore's comments had decisive political results. "Make a man feel humble by a thousand daily acts and he will act in a humble way".¹⁴

The basic unit of the caste system, the jati or sub-caste comprised an exogamous group whose members usually lived within a circumscribed geographical area. Jatis were internally differentiated economically. The poorer members of a jati generally gave a grante to and received patronage from their more prosperous jati leaders through their character as social pyramids just formed part of the prevailing patron-client pattern of politics, and encouraged the factionalism along vertical lines of village society.¹⁵

In north Bihar Brahmins, Kshatriya and Bhumiya also known as military Brahmins and Bachers predominated. These groups & but monopolised land ownership and held first place among the tenantry. Brahmins, Kshatriya and Bhumiya formed nearly a third proportion of the population of the region. Particular high caste groups were concentrated within particular areas. In a village studied by Ramashray Roy more than one fifth of the population were Brahmins, while in the Begusarai area in north Bihar around one fifth of the population were Brahmins. In Kuram district, Raiputia community had 10 per cent of the population. In a context in which, with the exception of the Yadavs, the other groups in the social hierarchy were so small, local rulers like of Dhanbad, Raiputia and Bhumiya contributed to their social and political pre-

commerce. Members of the Kayasth caste also had great influence. The Kayasths functioned as a literati. They monopolised the post of patwari, or village accountant, occupied important positions in the lower ranks of the bureaucracy, and dominated the legal profession.

The Yadavs (also known as Gajras and Ahirs) and the Kurmis and Kurus predominated in the middle range of the social hierarchy. The Kurmis and the hoers had a reputation as skilful hardworking cultivators, while the Yadavs, the most numerous caste group in north Bihar, combined their traditional occupation of cow herding with tenancy cultivation.

Among the poor peasant, low caste and Harijan groups predominated. Among the lower castes the Dusadhs and the Dhaniks formed the largest groups. Harijans comprised one-fifth of the north Bihar population. They were segregated into one of the three or four hamlets that made up the north Bihar village and suffered discrimination in every aspect of their lives. The Chamars and the Musahars were the two largest Harijan groups. In 1969 one official, patronisingly described the Musahars as field labourers, whose wages are paid in kind. They live in a state of social degradation, sometimes selling themselves, their wives, and children to lifelong servitude for paltry sums.¹⁷

The inequalities which were integral to the relations of dependence in north Bihar contributed to social stagnation through their impact on the health and education of the many of the people. The very conditions which provided reasons for tension curtailed its expression.

Among the mass of the population inadequate diet caused a malnutrition, endangered the intellectual development of children, and made people easy targets for the impact of disease, an impact facilitated by the unsanitary, overcrowded conditions in which most people lived.¹⁸ Every year, cholera and typhoid took their toll. Recurrent intestinal infections and hookworm were widespread, and adversely affected people's vitality. Malaria was widely prevalent. A survey done in the 1920s on children under ten years of age revealed that 7 per cent of them had an enlarged spleen as a result of malaria infection,¹⁹ and

health rarely existed among those who were worst fed and worst housed and most exploited. Those who, like the mico, proudest often had the least physical capacity to do so. The European planter, overlooking the wants experienced in many concerns, cordescendingly concluded that

They are mostly of the very poorest class. Many of them are physically handicapped, or who are partially, not a few are deaf and dumb, others are crippled or deformed, and numbers are epileptic and scrofulous. Numbers of them are affected in some districts with gout, caused probably by bad drinking water, & have a pinched, wizened, wan look, that tells of hard work and insufficiency.

Moreover, inadequate education circumscribed the horizons of the people and thus helped limit the expression of contact and tension. Only the rich could afford to educate their children. Illiteracy was almost universal. In 1921, less than 5 per cent of the population could read and write.¹⁴ Though except in the long established towns of winning & meagre owing from the soil, villagers knew little of book learning and of life and circumstances outside their immediate locality, and thus tended to accept existing circumstances as the only ones possible.

Poor communications limited the villager's mobility, and hence increased his parochialism and his dependence on the village elite. During the monsoon, movement became extremely difficult, and even during the dry seasons the railways were overburdened and the road system inadequate. Some villagers responded to oppression and economic pressure by migrating and others set out on long religious pilgrimages. But it seems that most lived their entire lives in close proximity to their place of birth.

Linguistic diversity strengthened parochialism. Most people spoke, as their first language, a distinctive village dialect current only in a limited area. In central and eastern north Bihar these dialects were part of the Maithili language, while in the west they formed the Bhojpuri language. Both languages were variants of Hindi, the linguistic franca of the region. People from different areas could interact by means of Hindi, but their communication was imperfect.

In the early twentieth century the society of North Bihar was generally quiet, but nonetheless open conflict did occur. Many riots erupted over agrarian disputes and other causes appeared in the records. However by 1924, the open expression of conflict had become within the villages almost a term which can be used for rare great and small acts of violence by planters and other thikadars, and rich peasants.²

Usually speaking two kinds of conflict existed. The first kind was a struggle between the village rate and those who held power externally to the villages. In this kind of struggle the members of the village attempted to assert the power from their locality before them. One rather curious kind of conflict was that of Jharkapur in Purulia a rich peasant who held a large area of land from the Maharaja of Jurbhanga. March 1922 the Raja Laxmichandra Ray, manager described him as

A reasonable man but never a friend of the Raja. He avoids public fight but covertly instigates tenants to challenge the Raja. His father Kanchanand excused from the whole Pargana [i.e. locality] against the Raja in the time of the manager Mr Mayer. He has great influence and can make his wife and son [i.e. and his sons] without settlement i.e. without paying rent.

The second kind of conflict occurred within the village between rival or co-loyal local leaders. In North Bihar, factionism, in the sense of the crystallisation of two distinct groups whose leaders competed for local power, frequently developed within village society. Both factions would usually be led by high caste men, sometimes from the same caste group and on occasion from the same family group. Faction leaders raised for support on their basis to it also on their relatives and events within village society. Inter-factional struggle perhaps performed a safety valve function, allowing the expression of tensions without threatening the stability of the social order.²⁶

These two kinds of conflict can be isolated for analytical purposes but in actuality they tended to overlap. Those involved in struggles against rivals within the villages tended to look outside for support. Meanwhile, external

power by strength of argument or skill in debate
to seduce us from our right course, by
with their subtle machinations to entice us
away. We may then say that the
heretics have lost their cause
in the plain power of reason.

The most recent and important development in the field of international law has been the establishment of a permanent Commission for the Settlement of Disputes between States. The members of the Commission are chosen by the General Assembly of the United Nations, and the term of office of each member is three years. The Commission is charged with the task of settling disputes between States by peaceful means, and it has the power to make recommendations to the General Assembly on any question of international law.

It is to be noted over half of the area of the
central basin could take factors of 1 to 2 to
control the vertical changes in the area. The maximum tension factor seems to be 1, and the
days of the year where the other factors begin in the
periodical order of 10% to 15% of the total water
in part have as the main characteristics, the
dike in advance and part back or H-shaped dike
is reflected waves against one another rather than against
the village gate or the authority of the water turbulent
and were scattered. In addition, a common feature is
also seem to have a water as a safety valve, and in the
fall, at a long time leaving in the area of 100
m x 100 m square, a small channel was con-
trolled and a river generally situated under the
bottom of the village gate. In early December in the
north of the area the effective unit was exercised by this gate
focussed on and contained the main expression of sand
thus providing a stable basis for the continuation of
British soil.

III

In the early twentieth century the administrative structure established by British rule overarched North Bihar. In each of the regions a senior district collector or Magistrate (also known as a District Officer) held responsibility

bility, on behalf of the province a government, for routine administration. The Collector Major Sir R. A. M. according to an affidavit served in the post in 1876 states:

"The pivot on which the whole administration turns although below him are orders his orders and engaged in assisting him a trust we have been informed from time to time and are engaged in giving his orders and instructions."

Minor offices known as subdivisions are assisted the collector Major's rate and the revenue may be one of the two or three subdivisions to each district.

Above the eye of the district there is a Sub-Divisional Commissioner, commanding the next unit of administration. The Jiribat is soon comprised the central and western districts of North Bihar - Ardhanga, Muhat, Upper Saran and Lower Saran and has its headquarters at Bhagalpur town. The remainder of the Province comprising North Muzaffarpur, South Muzaffarpur and Purnia may be the Jiribat districts, which also extended territory in West Bihar, and which had headquarters at Bhagalpur town. The southern bank of the Ganges the Sub-Divisional Commissioners reported to the provincial government, which was situated at Patna during most of the year and a Ranchi in the hill country in Southern Bihar during the wet weather. The officers in charge of districts, subdivisions and sub-divisions usually consist of British stock and were provided a staff of 10 clerks, assistants and clerks.

District heads carried out the day to day work of administration. They had responsibility for the maintenance of law and order, for the collection of the land revenue, for the welfare of the population and all the successful execution of a variety of more-far-reaching administrative duties. They sought to minimise social conflict by mediating between conflicting groups using their authority to bring about a mutually acceptable settlement. District and subdivision officers carried a heavy burden, working in large, thickly populated areas in which communications were very poor. Elizabeth Whitcombe comments that in the neighbouring United Provinces,

it was a cause of great alarm to see in the
after nineteenth century to have a distinct
or other of it a sanctioned as far abroad than it was
from a time about when we were used the per
formance of their duties.²²

Local officials in Bihar made it even harder to keep up
with the revenue in those times. The Bihar officials
were twice as large as those in the central provinces and
because of its financial weakness the zamindars less
government offices that any other province had a very
men. The man [text] c. 14,000.

As James Collyer writes, Bihar and Rasa was the poor
relation among the provinces which raised each year
the province from whom revenue of all other districts raised
Rs 1,000 per hector heavier than those which was less
than half the average amount by 4,50 raised by the
other provinces while most of the other provinces in
Bihar and Rasa did not profit by decreasing the amount
even a little because, in common with the other
areas in the former the government the receipts of
Bihar and Rasa from land revenue were lower than in
the previous ten years (1711, 1712, 1713, 1714, 1715)
and marginally increased since then.

The English had no control the Permanent Settlement
throughout the east and incorporated within the former
Bengal Presidency, which comprised the majority of
the remaining areas West Bengal. It has a bounded
part of Rasa and parts of the northern part of Bengal.
The British imposed the Permanent Settlement as a
stable, fixed extent of land holding power to ensure
economic and administrative stability by a weekly pre-
dictary rights in the possession of established and
controlling areas and in ensuring that no additional
revenue levied from those certified as zamindars and that
would not be increased. The British administrators
exacted the same revenue demand according to a rigid
rule, irrespective of whether the harvest was good or
bad, and some parts of the Bengal Presidency which
was uprooted occurred when established as a controller,
unable to meet their revenue payments, had to sell their
land to urban based speculators in north Bihar, however,
British revenue officials underestimated the productivity

of the land and hence demanded only a moderate land revenue, which permitted most of the land controlling families to retain their position.²⁹

TABLE 1.2

**Income and Expenditure (1927-28 Budgets) per 1,000
inhabitants of each province of British India**

Jurisdiction	Revenue Rs.	Expenditure Rs.
Bihar and Orissa	1,669	1,766
Bengal	2,295	2,372
United Provinces	2,848	2,543
Assam	3,503	3,679
Madras	3,911	3,690
Central Provinces	4,036	4,229
Punjab	5,380	5,258
Burma	7,824	9,156
Bombay	8,003	8,227

Source Adapted from table in Government of Great Britain, *Indian Statutory Commission* (12 vols., London 1930), XII, p. 388.

The implementation of the Permanent Settlement established stability but had adverse effects on the finances of the British administration and on the economy of the region. By holding the land revenue demand constant the British ensured that any increase in the rental value of the land would benefit the zamindars. The British hoped that in order to be able to demand higher rents, the zamindars would improve agricultural methods and techniques so as to increase production. More generally, the British hoped that with the security of a clear title to the land the zamindars would display sufficient industry and initiative to bring prosperity to the region.³⁰ These hopes met with disappointment.

The zamindars were aristocratic, rather than bourgeois, but a social and cultural context set them off from that in which the British improving aristocracy had emerged. To maintain and advance their local political power, zamindars sought to increase the number of people under their control. They displayed little interest in new techniques and technologies which would enable them to employ less labour, and instead of revolutionising their production system in the interest they used them to serve extensive patrimonial and credit networks and to bolster their prestige by means of conspicuous consumption.¹¹ They could profit from the burgeoning improving aristocracy. It was because of this policy that mid-nineteenth century industrial development in Bihar might have given rural the agrarian economy.

Steady population growth allowed zamindars to increase their profits without changing their style of land management. They converted as formerly uncultivated lands came under the plough, and the growing demands for land meant that rents could be raised without a commensurate increase in production. In addition to over-supply, a labour kept their wage bid low. Most of the rising profits from land rent stayed with the zamindars. The design of the Permanent Settlement intended that half the rents of the land collected by the zamindars should be passed on to the government as land revenue. By the end of the nineteenth century this officially approved ratio had become reversed, and one tenth of the rental income went to the government while the remainder stayed with the zamindars.¹²

In addition to their rents income, zamindars profited from the collection of dittwads, which were large but usually arrears of sannidhan dues. They also engaged in money lending and grain dealing. Through their various earnings they converted most of the agrarian surplus, only to dissipate it in non-productive ways. The peasant was suffering many of the pains of primitive capitalism accumulation, while society reaped none of the benefits.¹³

The Bihar and Orissa government could not command more than a small portion of the agrarian surplus indeed, because of the general moderation of the Jan-indian settlement in the region, the government's share of the surplus was even smaller than the extracted as land revenue elsewhere in the Bengal Presidency. Because of the agrarian

character of the primitive economy, only limited funds could be raised from other sources, and the government of Bihar was subject to such limitations, was liable to give Bihar and Orissa special aid and if the provincial government had extremely limited funds yet had to provide administrative services to a numerous and rapidly increasing population. The Bengal, where Bihar and Orissa were at part of the Bengal Presidency

the standard of expenditure in Bengal was lower than in any other province in India, and in Bengal the standard of Bihar and Orissa was still more than half what it was in the rest of the province.

This situation did not change in the post-colonial period. According to the available statistics of Bihar and Orissa the provincial government commented in 1951 that there has never been enough money in the past to procure any thing like an adequate standard.

The cause of some of the difficulties of the Bihar and Orissa administration could hardly be sought for over the people under its jurisdiction in the management of a large number of local governments by the hands of less than one hundred officials, spreading over the area of the two provinces of the province. In North Bihar less than forty liaison officers held responsibility for the government of a square miles where there were more than 40 million people. The provincial administration was also faced with collecting the per capita tax, which was the chief source of the total revenue and other taxes and maintaining public order. But it is not the great disparity between the amount the zamindars collected in Bihar and Orissa and the amount they paid as a revenue, the creation of a difficult revenue burden which after the collection of excise, stamp and other duties also increased enormously. However the frequency of riots arising out of agrarian disputes and the high incidence of crime posed a challenge to the maintenance of public order. To fulfil the aim to help preserve order, the administration looked to the army and to the police and chaukidars.

The British boasted that they had brought the rule of law to India, but in North Bihar their laws were 'collected for the rich and changes at will, for the poor'." The courts

TABLE 13

Expenditure (1927-28 Budget) on administrative services
per 1,000 inhabitants of each province of British India

Surisdiction	Education	Medical	Public Health	Agriculture	Industries
	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
Bihar & Orissa	256	88	44	45	26
Bengal	305	128	73	52	29
United Provinces	392	77	58	68	26
Assam	382	157	160	76	25
Madras	514	179	82	82	49
Central Provinces	407	14	28	127	21
Punjab	753	229	101	264	42
Burma	1,040	370	268	158	34
Bombay	1,073	260	128	150	5

Source Adapted from table in GCB, Statutory Commission,
XII, p. 377.

he filed a large number of cases, but a number effective & redress grievances. Judicial processes moved at a snail's pace, the law was complex, vague and inconsistent, and the lower ranks of the legal profession were muddled with corruption. The rich and the influential exerted all due influence and the tactic of harassing an enemy by 'getting up a false case against him was much used. The enemy might be ad libitum, be convicted and at the very least he would be put to the inconvenience of appearing at court to defend himself.'

A rural society in which few people had a modern & a sense of civil duty, individuals willing to perjure themselves for their kinsmen or patrons. And, such testimony proved inadequate, there were always professional witnesses hanging about the law courts, ready, for a small fee to present whatever evidence was required.¹⁰ In 1912 F E Lya, the Bhagpur District Officer, commented in his official annual report that

No one who has not heard at least a dozen tales as I have can imagine the utter disregard of justice now habitually worked in the name of justice through our Civil Courts, simply because a tangled web of procedure has put the poorer man, the less educated at the mercy of any unscrupulous man who chooses to ruin him by litigation.

Yet it was because of its deficiencies that the judicial system operated as an effective bulwark of British rule. If the judicial system had operated more fairly then it might have been employed by the disadvantaged in order to improve their position thus upsetting the social order upon which British rule rested. Through their corruption, the courts reinforced and legitimised the dominance of the rich and the powerful. And through its indecisiveness and tardy pace, the judicial system operated as a safety valve, providing a forum in which wealthy antagonists could let off their tensions and fight themselves to a financial standstill.

The police force operated in conjunction with the judicial system to preserve order. In north Bihar the core of the police force consisted of 3,000 trained career policemen. An auxiliary body of 26,000 chowkidars, or village watch

men, called *bawali* at the lower level⁴, the administrative recruited a *chaukidar* or *chaukidar* for each village consisting of the peasant and his wife, who reported to the higher *lala*. *Bawali* is the name *chaukidar* in each village. The *chaukidars* were paid their home wages. They were usually *zabita* and generally inherited their posts from others of the same castes. They had jurisdiction over villages, however, and punishment against their wrongdoing either, for the crimes and criminal events in the local station, and assisting the police in the investigation of crime and the apprehension of criminals. Payment they received a monthly salary, Rs 5 a month raised by a tax on the inhabitants of the village.⁵

An *itimad* or *panchayat* committee drew them among local standards, four men in each quarter are rich peasants, known as a *chaukidars* *pam hayal* or *an m*, being the representatives of every *chaukidar* from the villages and for settling disputes and giving the *chaukidars* partly because they now pay the *chaukidars* tended to be dishonest and corrupt. Not so frequently, they operated in connection with *zabita* *khanda* *lala*. I have heard few cases and the remuneration by a committee made up of local nobles greatly improved their independence, the *chaukidars*. Anand A. Yang comments, were never successfully incorporated into the official system. Instead, they operated as the functionaries of the landholders systems of control.⁶ The best that the author of the official *Wazir* Bihar and Orissa yearbook was able to say of them was that a large majority of *chaukidars* did their work with remarkable efficiency, and that no other class could perform these duties as cheaply.⁷

The basic unit of police operations was the police station or *thana*. These two terms were used interchangeably, and denoted both the actual police station *thana* building and the territory over which it had jurisdiction. Each district had some ten to twenty police stations, which meant that each station held jurisdiction over areas of tens of square miles populated by thousands of people. In Marbhanga in 1901, for example, there were twelve police stations and ten police outposts, manned by a total of 432 policemen. These policemen operated in an area of 3,448 square miles inhabited by 2,42,611 people. In

Darukha, i.e., there was one policeman to every 6-7 square miles and to every 5,000 members of the population.

The staff of each Thana consisted of a dozen or two constables under the direction of a Writer Head Constable, so called because of his literacy, and under the overall control of a Sub Inspector. The constables were unarmed except for batons while the Sub Inspector carried a revolver. Often, a couple of old shotguns lay about the Thana, for use against bandits and robbers. The Thana staff, with the assistance of the local chaukidars, handled the routine police work of the locality.

When a situation threatened to get out of control the local police could call for reinforcements from the Armed Reserve, a unit armed with muskets and made up of men seconded from the main police force for a two year period of special training. It was this unit consisted of 1,286 officers and men, of whom 400 were stationed in north Bihar. Help could also be requested from the Bihar and Orissa Military Police, an elite police unit of well-armed, highly trained men divided into four companies, two of which were mounted. One company, the Gurkha Military Police Company, comprised 100 officers and men stationed at Muzaffarpur town, the other three companies were stationed south of the Ganges, deputed to protect the provincial capital, Patna, and the south Bihar coal fields. These units, recruited from among ex-army men, were under the command of the provincial Inspector General of Police. The military provided the last resort. From 1857 a company of British infantry was based at Muzaffarpur town before then the nearest military help was south of the Ganges at Dainpat town, six miles west of Patna, the home base of a British infantry battalion.

In North Bihar, a policeman's lot was not a happy one. It involved night duty, trave over difficult country, and physical danger. Because of its financial difficulties the provincial government kept the wages of the police to a minimum. Constables usually came from high caste but impoverished backgrounds and earned a wage in the of Rs. 10 per month. Constable labourers earned about the same rate and the railway & postal employees earned more. Most constables compensated themselves for their poor pay and hard working conditions by extorting money.

and by accepting bribes. Indeed the opportunity to profit by corrupt practices helped greatly to attract recruits to the police force.²³

How was corruption limited to the lower ranks? Higher Head Constables earned twice as much as constables but had a better education, came from a higher social stratum and were accustomed to a higher standard of living. A Higher Head Constable could not live on his pay and even if he wished to run straight he found himself driven to dishonesty. The Higher Head Constable, according to Inspector General R J Hirat was the center of the circle, spreading his influence above and below him. The rank above the Higher Head Constable was that of the Sub Inspector. In his secret report of 1924 Hirat commented revealingly that some of our Sub Inspectors enter the service with the desire to earn an honest living while some of that number continue to keep their honest purpose.²⁴

Among the more highly paid and predominantly British higher ranks, the Inspectors and District Superintendents of Police corruption was less frequent, though here too a scandalised in 1924 the administration established the four Inspectors along with four Sub Inspectors and three Head Constables had been drawn into the network of corruption which Police Superintendent Frank Lockwood Lassau had created in Barbhanga and adjoining districts. The official investigation also revealed the collusion of several other policemen.

The Russell case posed a dilemma for the administration. Some of the suspected policemen refused to give any evidence to the investigation committee, while others provided ample information thus establishing a strong case against themselves. Would it be fair to punish those who had given information, while those who had refused to co-operate escaped punishment because there was insufficient concrete evidence against them? Eventually, in a decision which reveals official acceptance that a certain level of corruption was unavoidable, the administration dismissed only Russell and his closest accomplice, and merely subjected the other culprits to departmental disciplinary action.²⁵

Many policemen supplemented dishonesty with brutality. The Indian Police Commission of 1902 revealed numerous instances in which policemen had beaten up convicts, suspects and witnesses and recorded some incidents of torture.⁵¹ Because of their behaviour people feared and distrusted the police and did not assist them in the execution of their duties.⁵² Their work also suffered because of their sparse numbers. As Table 1.4 illustrates, Bihar and Orissa spent the least on police per head of population and had the lowest proportion of police to population of any of the provinces of British India.

TABLE 1.4

Ratio of people to police and cost of police in provinces of British India, 1929

Jurisdiction	People to Each Policeman	Cost per 1,000 of Population
Bihar & Orissa	2,372	236
Bengal	1,853	314
Assam	1,772	303
United Provinces	1,343	328
Madras	1,526	370
Central Provinces	1,259	424
Punjab	1,053	481
Bombay	776	700
Burma	954	843

Source Adapted from table in GGB, Statutory Commission, XII, p. 389.

Policemen formed part of a garrison dotted across the countryside, rather than active participants in the day

--

and the Royal Bank of Canada, publishing
a **Limited Report**.

To keep their record from being destroyed and taken
the British kept it up, and so it was
well preserved, but finally, one day, it
burned in the Parliament building at Paris, and
the original was lost forever. However, the
British had made copies of it, and these
they also preserved. The British were taking care
of the original, and the only new copies (one
of which is now in the British Museum) were
made from among the original documents. The
British kept these records in the British Library, a
government office, by the name of the British Library, and
these records are still there to this day. The
British have kept them for the last two
centuries, except for the first century, when they
spent most of the time in England, and then
under challenge.

IV

Throughout the nineteenth century the Bihar population had been increasing. In the eighteenth century famine and the recurrent warfare with the Marathas and the Mughals, had kept the population in check at 1,750,000. In the eighteenth century the Pax Britannica continued with effective law and fiscal measures to permit steady population growth. In the vast tracts of North Bihar had been brought under cultivation and had been brought under the plough. In the first year for which reliable census figures are available, 1781, after half a century of Pax Britannica, the population of Bihar had a surplus of 1,100,000 over the number of cultivable acres at 1,670,000 per square mile. As a result, population growth continued in the ensuing decades.

To judge from the figures of the census returns, the total size of the region's population remained relatively constant between 1810 and 1850. However it should be noted that because of the small size of the districts in which census heavy weights were measured that the 1810, 1830 and 1850 figures do not indicate accurately the size of the population in most of the intervening decades.

In the period from 1850 to 1870, with the exception of the eighties, disease more effectively inhibited than the Pax Britannica or the Pax Maratha growth of population. But in 1870, a new era of expansion began. Harkai Muzrai was a little village. A surveyor in the old British official had remarked that

A thought exceeded by the figures for a few years ago
dwell in such a village as Harkai. The portion of
North Bihar which comprises the three districts of
Bihar, Harkai and Barabanga has a more teeming
population than any other tract of equal area in Bengal
or Eastern Bengal.¹⁶

During the course of the late 19th century, political or
business became particularly frequent in this part of North Bihar.

During the nineteenth century there had been sufficient
united land in the region to absorb the rise in population

Source: Censuses of India 1951 1951. Figures discount south Bihar
settlement of Monghyr and Bhagalpur.

TABLE 1.5

Population, Population Density and Decennial Change in north Bihar, 1881-1951

Year	Population	Total Area = square miles (1,406 Sq. Miles)	Decennial Change	Percentage Change
1881	13,169,378	6.5	-	
1891	13,977,588	653	+ 808,210	+ 6.14
1901	13,995,889	654	+ 18,301	+ 0.13
1911	14,293,474	668	+ 297,590	+ 2.13
1921	14,286,246	663	- 37,233	- 0.75
1931	15,316,708	7.6	+ 1,530,462	+ 10.34
1941	16,829,665	789	+ 1,582,957	+ 10.34
1951	18,392,836	859	+ 1,493,171	+ 8.04

of the last five centuries, and the
most important and interesting scenes in
the history have been enacted upon its banks.
The name of the river is derived from the
Spanish word *Guadalupe*, which means
"Our Lady of Guadalupe." As it crosses
the mountains, it has a rocky bed,
but as it descends to the valley, it becomes
a broad, shallow stream, with banks
so soft and yielding that the water
flows over them with such violence
as to dash them to pieces, so that
the river is at times a perfect cataract
which sets in its basin.

For the poor, rural areas and urban slums, the
rate of growth has been higher. By the end of
the twentieth century the rural population had
increased by 100 million, the rural population
of India is 51.5% of the total population.
Urban areas have grown rapidly, especially
since the 1980s. The urban population has
increased by 100 million. The urban population
is now 31.2% of the total population.

I think it would be necessary to introduce a new
constitutional system which envisages a federal
and ensured that each of the agrarian units was kept
under the control. What is the actual work of government

Category	Sub-Category	Parameter	Description	Value
System A	Processor	CPU Type	Intel Core i9-13900K	Yes
		RAM Capacity	32GB DDR5	No
System B	Processor	CPU Type	AMD Ryzen 9 7950X	Yes
		RAM Capacity	64GB DDR5	No
System C	Processor	CPU Type	Intel Core i9-12900K	Yes
		RAM Capacity	32GB DDR5	No
System D	Processor	CPU Type	AMD Ryzen 9 7945HX	Yes
		RAM Capacity	64GB DDR5	No
System E	Processor	CPU Type	Intel Core i9-13900K	Yes
		RAM Capacity	32GB DDR5	No
System F	Processor	CPU Type	AMD Ryzen 9 7950X	Yes
		RAM Capacity	64GB DDR5	No
System G	Processor	CPU Type	Intel Core i9-12900K	Yes
		RAM Capacity	32GB DDR5	No
System H	Processor	CPU Type	AMD Ryzen 9 7945HX	Yes
		RAM Capacity	64GB DDR5	No
System I	Processor	CPU Type	Intel Core i9-13900K	Yes
		RAM Capacity	32GB DDR5	No
System J	Processor	CPU Type	AMD Ryzen 9 7950X	Yes
		RAM Capacity	64GB DDR5	No
System K	Processor	CPU Type	Intel Core i9-12900K	Yes
		RAM Capacity	32GB DDR5	No
System L	Processor	CPU Type	AMD Ryzen 9 7945HX	Yes
		RAM Capacity	64GB DDR5	No
System M	Processor	CPU Type	Intel Core i9-13900K	Yes
		RAM Capacity	32GB DDR5	No
System N	Processor	CPU Type	AMD Ryzen 9 7950X	Yes
		RAM Capacity	64GB DDR5	No
System O	Processor	CPU Type	Intel Core i9-12900K	Yes
		RAM Capacity	32GB DDR5	No
System P	Processor	CPU Type	AMD Ryzen 9 7945HX	Yes
		RAM Capacity	64GB DDR5	No
System Q	Processor	CPU Type	Intel Core i9-13900K	Yes
		RAM Capacity	32GB DDR5	No
System R	Processor	CPU Type	AMD Ryzen 9 7950X	Yes
		RAM Capacity	64GB DDR5	No
System S	Processor	CPU Type	Intel Core i9-12900K	Yes
		RAM Capacity	32GB DDR5	No
System T	Processor	CPU Type	AMD Ryzen 9 7945HX	Yes
		RAM Capacity	64GB DDR5	No
System U	Processor	CPU Type	Intel Core i9-13900K	Yes
		RAM Capacity	32GB DDR5	No
System V	Processor	CPU Type	AMD Ryzen 9 7950X	Yes
		RAM Capacity	64GB DDR5	No
System W	Processor	CPU Type	Intel Core i9-12900K	Yes
		RAM Capacity	32GB DDR5	No
System X	Processor	CPU Type	AMD Ryzen 9 7945HX	Yes
		RAM Capacity	64GB DDR5	No
System Y	Processor	CPU Type	Intel Core i9-13900K	Yes
		RAM Capacity	32GB DDR5	No
System Z	Processor	CPU Type	AMD Ryzen 9 7950X	Yes
		RAM Capacity	64GB DDR5	No

A large amount of funding was spent on the construction of the new building, which was completed in 1995. The building is a modern, multi-story structure with a glass facade and a central entrance. It features a large auditorium, several classrooms, and a library. The building is located in a prime location, overlooking the city and the sea. The new building has greatly improved the facilities available to the school, making it easier for students to learn and for teachers to teach.

gard the stability of the zamindari system that they in
quest, through the agency of the Court of Madras, pro-
tected zamindari estates from bankruptcy and dis-
gration.⁶⁴ The contradiction between economic rationality
and political expediency could not have been more complete.
Over all, the agrarian economy of North Bihar had stagnated
so that the rural life framework was faced by chronic
subsistence crises but by virtue of its connection with an
imperial system remained vulnerable to fluctuations in the
world economy.⁶⁵

Population increase pressed most heavily on the poor
peasants. With growing numbers competing for the right
to share crop land and wages for men, women and agrarian
labourers the bargaining position of the poor peasants
became steadily worse. Some resorted to migration, either
temporarily or permanently. For example, during the
slack period in the agrarian cycle in densely populated
Sadar around 10 per cent of the population migrated to
Bengal and elsewhere in search of work.⁶⁶

When times were particularly hard, poor peasants also
resorted to crime.⁶⁷ In 1919, 51 per cent of all convictions
were for one month or less, and 54 per cent of all prisoners
were serving sentences of three months or less. The
British officer concluded that A very large proportion of
these short term convicts are driven by want of food
to the commission of petty theft.⁶⁸

The pressure of population increase also threatened the
position of the middle peasants. They had sufficient land
to avoid having to sell their labour, but further subdivision
of their land through inheritance threatened to cast them
into the ranks of the poor peasants. They sought to ac-
quire extra land in order to avert this development.

Population increase both benefited and disadvantaged
the small landlords and rich peasants. It benefited them
by increasing their revenue over those to whom they
reparted their lands or over those whom they employed
as labourers. Yet like the middle peasants, the break up
of their holdings through inheritance threatened them with
a decline in wealth, power and status.

By the beginning of the twentieth century a Britisher had greatly fragmented zamindari property. In many instances, I very influential zamindar families had descended into the ranks of the middle peasants. The history of one Rajput family typified the fate of many. This family had migrated into Baran in 1788 and had at first controlled all the villages of Gangapur and Bhagat. During the nineteenth century the property of the family became dispersed as successive generations of descendants inherited smaller and smaller shares.¹¹ Summary, the marriage of fragmentation threatened rich peasants and their large and small landlords continually attempted to increase the area of land over which they had control.¹²

V

During the first half of this century north Bihar's population steadily increased but its economy continued to stagnate. This circumstance underlay the political discontent which characterised the region during the period from 1917 to 1947. To analyse it can be seen especially clearly in the disputes and confrontations that developed over the use and distribution of land. Its relationship with agriculture cannot be easily seen directly but it needs to be that the pressure of population growth created a reservoir of discontent and antagonisms upon which the nationalist movement drew. And more directly, nationalist propaganda claimed that the stagnation was due to the lack of economic development.

The first spasm of mass unrest occurred in the period between 1917 and 1923. This turbulence may be related to the high prices and scarcity prevalent in those years. War induced economic dislocation increased the prices of consumer goods and a subsequent fall in wages resulted in food grains being in scarce supply and highly priced. Scarce and high prices prevailed in 1915, 1917, and 1920 and high prices continued throughout the 1920s. Most people had few reserves with which to tide themselves over even one bad year, and suffered greatly from recurrents of bad times.

The poor peasants suffered most. The wages for labour remained relatively steady but from them labourers had

prices had risen.

In contrast to the point, vertical and nearly horizontal lines to the members of the stage and the base, the right, left, top, bottom and other higher lines grammatical lines) there is yet their reading were easier than that of the original text from the phrasing of the sentence structure, and so on. And it is clear that the more easily the reader can find the lines of the text, the better he can read it. It is also clear that the better the reader can read the text, the more easily he can find the lines of the text.

The right to bear arms, as I have hitherto understood it, is the
right to possess the implements of war, or, in other words,
the right to maintain the independence of the country.
The right to bear arms, as I have hitherto understood it, is
the right to maintain the independence of the country.
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Partly this is a problem of sources. The statistics available are sketchy and unreliable and the qualitative evidence refers generally to developments within the province and its divisions rather than to the details of developments within the districts. Only a limited amount of detailed information is available about the particular situation at different stages of the agrarian cycle and about the variations in the incidence and impact of hard conditions in and between districts. Hence it is impossible to present a more fully detailed account of the chronologically and intra-regionally differential occurrence of scarcity and high prices.

But even if such an account existed it would only go part of the way in explaining the emergence and in defining the quality of popular dissidence in the 1917 to 1923 period. To understand this dissidence more fully, it is necessary to enquire in detail into the antecedents and course of particular protest campaigns. Accordingly the following three chapters deal in turn with anti-planter protest, with Swami Vidyanand's peasants movement, and with the non-cooperation movement.

NOTES

Chapter 1

- 1 For information on north Bihar see J. Byrne, *Bengal District Gazetteers*, Bhagalpur, Calcutta (1911), Sir John Houldon, *Bihar. The Heart of India* (London, Calcutta 1921), Max M. Stein, *Survey of Bihar. Land, Sport and Work on the Nepal Frontier* (London 1924), L. S. S. Olkley, *Bengal District Gazetteers* (F. Chapman & Sons 1907), *Calcutta 1907*; *Saran 1907* (1908); *Muzaffarpur 1907* (Calcutta 1907), *Darbhanga 1907*, *Hanthwa 1909*, and *Purnea 1911*; O. K. H. Knott, A. T. A. Learmonth and B. H. Farmer, *India, Pakistan and Ceylon. The Regions* (London, 3rd ed. 1946) and *Norden & Son, History of Bihar. Indian Peasants* (Calcutta 1945 and 1948).
- 2 The following account of the social structure of north Bihar in the early 20th century draws conceptionally on Hamza Alavi's 'Peasants and Revolution' in Kathleen Gough and Hari P. Sharma (eds.), *Imperialism and Revolution in South Asia* (New York/London 1971) and his *Rural Bases of Political Power in South Asia*, *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 4, 2, 1974. For information I have drawn on the Bengal District Gazetteers, the Survey and Settlement Reports and the decennial Census reports. For a preliminary discussion which encompasses the fluidity of the social structure for those above the subsistence level see Peter B. Boag, *Hierarchy and Resources. Peasant Stratification in Late Nineteenth Century Bihar*, *Modern Asian Studies* 13, 1, 1979. Boag's analysis poses some interesting points, but deals only briefly with the relationship between indebtedness and social position and neglects the tendency in traditional society for kinship and factional networks to help protect cultivators against fluctuations in their individual fortunes.
- 3 It should be recalled that middle peasants of high caste status were subject to ritual sanctions against the per-

formance of various agricultural tasks. Hence they were obliged to employ labourers for these tasks. However since the amount of land they controlled was small and they had limited resources these high caste middle peasants generally employed only one or two labourers and hired them only on a short term basis.

- 4 See Pad. Annual Administrative Report hereafter AAR], 10 August 1970, section [hereafter C XXXIV, 12A, General Department [hereafter G.D.] 1970, Barabhanga Archives hereafter RDA]
- 5 O'Malley, Saran, p. 123.
- 6 Interview, Umarpathu Pemari, Dumari village Barabhanga, 17 October 1976. See also Rajendra Prasad Autobiography, (Bombay 1971) pp. 1-3.
- 7 For a study of the local elite in one north Bihar village see Ramashray Roy, Conflict and Co-operation in a rural Bihar Village, *Journal of the Bihar Research Society*, XLIX, 1963.
- 8 At the turn of the century the two largest zamindars in north Bihar after the Maharsa of Barabhanga were the Maharsi of Hathwa and the Maharsi of Bettiah who held respectively 501 and 1,844 square miles of property and paid Rs 2,00,000 and Rs 51,000 in land revenue. O'Malley, Saran, p. 43, Champaran pp. 51-2. By 1907, in the north Bihar districts of Saran, Champaran, Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga and Purnea there were only 25 estates which paid more than Rs 5,000 in land revenue. Only six of these estates paid more than Rs 100,000, 11 paid between Rs 15,000 and Rs 10,000 and 48 paid between Rs 5,000 and Rs 15,000. In the Bengal Presidency as a whole by 1907 only 190 estates paid more than Rs 5,000 in land revenue. The ownership of these 546 estates was shared between 1,178 persons, of whom only 364 paid as individuals, more than Rs 5,000 per year. Government of Bengal hereafter G.B.H., Land Revenue Proceedings [hereafter LR], 1904, B 1-7 10, July 1907, West Bengal Archives hereafter WBA]
- 9 On the Darbhanga Raj and its rulers see Qayamuddin Ahmed, 'Origin and growth of the Darbhanga Raj (154-1666)', based on some contemporary and unpublished documents, *Indian Historical Records Commission Proceedings* XXXVI Part II, 1961. (See Dewey, 'The History of Mithila and the Records of the Darbhanga Raj', *Modern Asian Studies* 10, 1976 Jata Shankar Jha,

A History of Darbhanga Raj (Patna 1968) and Biography of an Indian Patriot Mahadev Lakmishwar Singh of Darbhanga (Patna 1972) (O'Malley, Darbhanga, pp. 14-6; Ishvar Prasad Singh, *The Youngest Legislator of India. The Biography of the Honble Mahareddhiraia Sir Kamleshwar Singh Bahadur, K.C.I.E.* of Darbhanga (Patna 1971); and 'Uvan Harayan Singh, *A History of Tirhut from the earliest times to the end of the nineteenth century* (Calcutta 1922). See also the Mahavidhik Dr Kamleshwar Singh Memorial Volume *Journal of the Bihar Research Society* 31 VIII, 1942. For information about the Mauthu Brahman Community, see P. R. Brass, *Graduate Religion and Priests in North India* (London 1974) and Hukar Jha, 'Nation Building in a north Indian region. The case of Mauthu', unpublished manuscript. Hukar Jha of the Sociology Department, Patna University kindly permitted me to use this manuscript.) For details of Rameshwari Singh's activities as a leader of orthodox hinduism see Richard Gordon 'The Hindu Mahasabha and the Indian National Congress 1915 to 1926', *Modern Asian Studies* 9, 2, 1975, pp. 155-160, 81. For the income and expenditure of the Darbhanga Raj see ('O'Malley, Darbhanga, p. 145. Extracts from the Annual Report of the State Accounting Manager', 'B.R.N.I.R' 48-49, May 1878, p. 2, Bihar State Archives (hereafter BSAR). Report on the Administration of the Darbhanga Raj 1914-15, C XXXV, C 1915, 1b RDA.

- 10 O'Malley, *Darbhanga and Saran* Girish Mishra, *Agrarian Problems of Permanent Settlement. A Case Study of Champaran* (New Delhi, 1978).
- 11 See Ronald I. Herring 'Radical Politics and Revolution in South Asia', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 7, 1 1978.
- 12 In all of the north Bihar districts except Purulia, Muslims formed around 12 per cent of the population. In Purulia, they comprised 43 per cent of the population, & it were particularly numerous in the eastern half of the district. O'Malley, Purulia, pp. 58, 60. Centuries of Mughal rule had helped shape the aspect of north Bihar society before the subjugation of women. Bihar was 'the most Purdah ridden province in India' and women from better off families rarely moved outside their homes. Women were second class citizens and any initiative to improve their lot elicited a hostile reaction. Sexual exploitation was allied with social and

- economic exploitation at poor and low caste women were preyed on by money lenders, zamindars and rich peasants. Circular from Ramnandan Misra, All India Congress Committee Papers hereafter A.I.C.C.P., C 43 (vi) (vii) 1935, Nehru Memorial Library, hereafter NML, Searchlight 24 Jan 1930 Tha, Nation Building in Mithila, pp. 94-5.
- 13 In 1907 Muslims owned nine of the 75 estates in the districts of Baran, Champaran, Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga and Purnea that paid more than Rs 4 0'0 in land revenue. Separate figures for the north Bengal sections of Monghyr and Birbhum districts are not available (B.R.N. 1 R 1907 4 B. 07-10 L. v 1907, WBA).
- 14 Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World (London 1967), p. 383.
- 15 See Ravinder Kumar, 'The Political Process in India, South Asia I, 77] In North Bihar Village' Ramashray Roy examines the history of factionalism in the village of Radhanagar from 1900 to 1960. For details about two factional conflicts in areas under the control of the Darbhanga Ra., see Brief of case of Charanit Jha vs. Naibhat Jha, f 10F C V (Criminal), Law Department hereafter I., 1920 21, RLA, Assistant Manager, Diary 28 May 1923, [5 C XXV, G 9.2 23 RDA. For a perceptive analysis of factionalism in village India see A T Carter, 'Political Stratification and Caste-Aliances in Rural Western Maharashtra', Modern Asian Studies, 6, 4, 1972.
- 16 R.v., North Bihar v. Ilake, p. 178, Bihar Government Communique, Searchlight, 10 Feb 1931 O'Malley's Scrap, p. 32.
- 17 O'Malley Monghyr p. 51. See also Byrne Bhagalpur p. 52.
- 18 M N Karna, Health, Culture and Community in a North Bihar Village, Ph.D thesis, Patna University, 1970, Partbar AAR C XXXIV G 19 4 70 RDA Maori, Nepal Frontier, pp. 137-8.
- 19 G E Owen, Bihar and Orissa in 1922 (Patna 1922), pp. 42-4. See also Nagdighar AAR, f 1074 C 1937 38, RDA.
- 20 Maori, Nepal Frontier p. 21.
- 21 Nor was the extent of literacy increasing rapidly. As of March 1922, only 4.27 per cent of the male, and 0.65 per cent of the female, or 2.43 per cent of the

- total population of the province was undergoing destruction between Bihar 1921, p. 112.
- 22 For general accounts of rioting see the annual G.B.O., *Report on the Administration of the Police in the Province of Bihar and Orissa* (Patna, annual various dates). The argument that follows draws on Anand A. Iaikha's *The Ag at its Origins of Time. A Study of Riots in Saran District, India, 1966-1970*, *Journal of Social History* X II, 2, Winter 1979.
- 23 Dharanpur AAR, 11 March 1920 (20 C XXXIV, 1, 1920), R 1A. See also O'Malley, *Purnea* pp. 130-1.
- 24 Roy, 'North Bihar Village', pp. 361-4.
- 25 Yang, *Rights in Saran*, p. 12. Unfortunately, however, our knowledge of clashes between district strata is limited because, as Frank Perlin points out, 'Only that conflict interesting with administration or man-eated on such a scale as to be noticeable outside, is likely to be recorded, while conflict within the village, between castes or privileged and underprivileged zamindars, is too likely to escape the authorities'. See his *Cycles, Trends and Accidents among the Peasantry of North West India*, *Journal of Peasant Studies* 2, 1, April 1975, p. 367. Walter Hauser refers to an area in Patna district south Bihar where disputes within zamindari estates did not usually reach the courts because the zamindars decided the disputes and enforced their decisions with the aid of militia. *The Bihar Province Kisan Sabha*, 1979, 04, a study of an Indian Peasant Movement, Ph.D. thesis, University of Chicago, 1961, p. 52.
- 26 J. Beames, *Memoirs of a Bengal Civilian* (London, 1961), p. 134.
- 27 See her *Agrarian Conditions in Northern India* Volume One *The United Provinces under British Rule 1880-900* (Los Angeles, London, 1972), p. 24.
- 28 Government of Great Britain (hereafter G.B.), *Indian Statistical Commission* 12 vols. (London, 1931), X, p. 388.
- 29 B. H. Baden Powell, *The Land Systems of British India* (3 vols. London 1893), I, pp. 387-442; Rama,lt Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal. An Essay on the Idea of Permanent Settlement* (Paris, 1963); S. R. Wilson, *Wilson Hunter, Bengal M.S. Records* 2 Vols. (London 1894), I, pp. 74-84.
- 30 Baden Powell, *Land Systems*, I, p. 440; Hunter, *Records*,

- I, pp. 89-104; O'Malley, *Champaran*, p. 125, *Muzaffarpur*, p. 114, *Purnea*, pp. 116-17; J. H. Kerr, *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the Darbhanga District 1890 to 1903*, (Patna 1926); Mishra, *Agrarian Problems*, pp. 9-18.
- 31 Guha, *Rule of Property*, pp. 167-86; Hunter Bengal Records, pp. 74-84.
- 32 Walter C. Neale, 'Land is to Rule', in R.E. Frykenberg, (ed.) *Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History* (London 1969) pp. 9-15; Mishra, *Agrarian Problems*, pp. 34-47.
- 33 A. Earle, Resolution 147T-R, 20 June 1904, appended to Kerr, *Darbhanga Settlement Report*; O'Malley, *Monghyr*, p. 154; Baden-Powell, *Land Systems*, I, pp. 438-40; Mishra, *Agrarian Problems*, pp. 15, 28-29.
- 34 Moore, *Social Origins*, p. 360. See also Daniel and Alice Thorner, *Land and Labour in India* (London 1962), p. 109.
- 35 GGB, *Statutory Commission*, XII, pp. 372-5, 387; B.R. Tomlinson, 'India and the British Empire, 1880-1935', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, XI, 2-3, 1974.
- 36 GGB, *Statutory Commission*, XII, p. 375.
- 37 *Ibid.*, p. 391.
- 38 Secretary of State for India, *India Office and Burma Office List*, 1911, (London, 1911).
- 39 Pierre Proudhon, quoted in Barbara W. Tuchman, *The Proud Tower: A Portrait of the World Before the War, 1890-1914*, (New York, 1970, first pub. 1966), p. 74.
- 40 Byrne, *Bhagalpur*, pp. 115-19; Macri, *Nepaul Frontier*, pp. 152-3, 163, 165; Owen, *Bihar* 1921, p. 113; Parihar AAR C XXXIV, G 1915-16, RDA; letter 4, C IX G 1921-22, RDA; Alapur Manager, Diary, 9 May 1923, C XXV, G 1922-23, RDA; District Magistrate Johnson to Bhagalpur Commissioner, 21 February 1921, Government of Bihar and Orissa [hereafter GBO], Political Special Department [hereafter PS], 166, 1921, BSA. See also Walter C. Neale, *Economic Change in Rural India. Land Tenure and Reform in Uttar Pradesh 1800-1955*, (London 1962), pp. 192-7.
- 41 Quoted in Byrne, *Bhagalpur*, p. 117.
- 42 Byrne, *Bhagalpur*, p. 147; O'Malley, *Champaran*, p. 139, *Saran*, p. 136, *Muzaffarpur*, p. 126, *Darbhanga*, p. 129; *Monghyr*, pp. 182-3, *Purnea*, p. 147; Owen, *Bihar* 1921; H.C. Prior, *Bihar and Orissa in 1921*, (Patna 1924) p. 75.

- 43 Maori, *Nepaul Frontier*, p.156; Owen, *Bihar 1921*, p.103; Byrne, *Bhagalpur*, p.52.
- 44 Yang, 'Riots in Saran', pp.3, 7.
- 45 Owen, *Bihar 1921*, p.103. For consistently critical remarks, see the annual *Police Administration Reports*.
- 46 O'Malley, *Darbhanga*, pp.1, 129.
- 47 Rainey to Secretary, GOI, 29 May 1921, PS f 29, 1921, BSA; Dundas to GBO, PS f 218, 1922, BSA; E.L.L. Hammond to Army Secretary, 10/11 March 1922, HP f 49, 1921, NAI; PS f 572, 1921, BSA; Memorandum, HP f 49, 1921, NAI; GBO to Scoope, Tirhoot Commissioner, 17 Apr. 1922, PS f 29, 1921, BSA.
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- 49 Corruption Report, p.6; Hirst Report, pp.6, 17, 18, 28.
- 50 GBO PS f 140, 1920, BSA.
- 51 See also HP f A 159-170, Aug. 1910, NAI; Gertrude Emerson Sen, *Voiceless India*, (Benares, 1946), pp.169-82; Maori, *Nepaul Frontier*, pp.151-9; Prasad, *Autobiography*, p.14.
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- 53 C.S. McDonald, Bahora Division Manager to Chief Manager, 19 June 1923, f 20, C XXV C 1922-23, RDA.
- 54 Yang, 'Riots in Saran', pp.7, 13.
- 55 Hauser, 'Bihar Kisan Sabha', p.7, note 7. See also Ira Klein, 'Population and Agriculture in Northern India, 1873-1921', *Modern Asian Studies*, 8, 2, 1974.
- 56 O'Malley, *Muzaffarpur*, p.21.
- 57 Quoted in Kerr, *Darbhanga Settlement Report*, p.84.
- 58 Ibid., pp.80, 81, 85.
- 59 O'Malley, *Purnea*, p.72.
- 60 Spate, et. al., *India*, pp.564, 565, 569.
- 61 Amiya Kumar Bagchi, 'Reflections on Patterns of Regional Growth in India During the Period of British Rule', *Bengal Past and Present*, XLV, Part 1, No.180, Jan.-June 1976, p.272.
- 62 Ibid., pp.260-267. See also Rajat. K. Ray, 'The Crisis of Bengal Agriculture, 1870-1927 - The Dynamics

- of Immobility', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, X, 3, 1973, pp. 272-9.
- 63 Bagchi, 'Patterns of Regional Growth'; Ray, 'Crisis of Bengal Agriculture'; Mishra, *Agrarian Problems*, Chapter 4; C.M. Fisher, *Indigo Plantations and agrarian society in North Bihar in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries*, D.Phil. thesis, Cambridge University, 1976.
- 64 Ray, 'Crisis of Bengal Agriculture', pp. 244-5; Bagchi, 'Patterns of Regional Growth', p. 265.
- 65 Fisher, 'Indigo Plantations', pp. 109-10.
- 66 One typical instance was their handling of the affairs of the Darbhanga Raj after the death of Moneshwar Singh, who was Maharaja of Darbhanga from 1829 until his death in 1860. During his reign Moneshwar Singh supported a host of kinsfolk, lived in great state, and spent lavishly on ceremonies. Many of his relatives held posts in the administration of the Darbhanga estates, and displayed an inefficiency only surpassed by their venality. When Moneshwar Singh died, leaving behind a minor heir, the Darbhanga Raj was verging on bankruptcy. But the provincial government stepped in, took over the administration of the estates and, by careful management, restored prosperity before handing them back to the heir. Lakmeshwar Singh, when he came of age in 1879. J. Burn, 'Report on the Administration of the Darbhanga Estates, 1860-1879', GBEN, LR 49-53, August 1880, BSA. See also Anand A. Yang, 'An Institutional Shelter: The Court of Wards in late Nineteenth Century Bihar', *Modern Asian Studies*, 13, 2, 1979.
- 67 Amiya Bagchi, 'Foreign Capital and Economic Development in India: A Schematic View', in Gough and Sharma, *Imperialism and Revolution*, p. 33.
- 68 Anand A. Yang, 'Peasants on the Move: A Study of Internal Migration in India', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, X, 1, Summer 1979. See also O'Malley, *Muzaffarpur*, pp. 87-8 and Saran, p. 92 and Fisher, 'Indigo Plantations'.
- 69 For discussion of the relation between economic conditions and the crime rate see GBO Fortnightly Report Number Two [hereafter FR (2)], August 1930, PS f 8, 1920; G.E. Owen, *Bihar and Orissa in 1928-29*, (Patna 1930), p. 61.
- 70 Owen, *Bihar 1921*, pp. 100, 109.

- 71 James R. Hagen and Anand A. Yang, 'Local Sources for the Study of Rural India: The 'Village Notes' of Bihar', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, XIII, 1, 1976, p. 70.
- 72 Kerr, *Darbhanga Settlement Report*, p. 101; O'Malley, *Darbhanga*, p. 120.

Chapter 2

- 1 O'Malley, *Champaran*, pp. 108-11; Maori, *Nepaul Frontier*, p. 7.
- 2 D.B. Misra (ed.), *Select Documents on Mahatma Gandhi's Movement in Champaran 1917-18* (Patna 1963) 'Introduction', p. 8.
- 3 R.P. Kling, *The Blue Mutiny. The Indigo Disturbances in Bengal 1859-1862*, (London, 1966); Ranajit Guha, 'Neel-Darpan: The Image of a Peasant Revolt in a Liberal Mirror', *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 2, 1, October 1974.
- 4 Fisher, 'Indigo Plantations', p. 35.
- 5 G. Mishra, 'Indigo Plantation and the Agrarian Relations in Champaran during the Nineteenth Century', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, III, 4 Dec. 1966; Byrne, *Bhagalpur*, p. 129; O'Malley, *Champaran*, p. 111, Seron, p. 102-3, *Muzaffarpur*, p. 101, *Darbhanga*, p. 99, Monghyr, p. 140-1, Purnea, p. 130-1; K.K. Datta, *History of the Freedom Movement in Bihar* (3 vols., Patna, 1957), I, pp. 179-80.
- 6 O'Malley, *Muzaffarpur*, p. 126.
- 7 Gorakh Prasad to Editor, *Searchlight*, 31 Dec. 1920; 'The Voice of the Tenant', *Searchlight*, 22 Sept. 1922; Judith M. Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power: Indian Politics 1915-1922* (London 1972) p. 64; Datta, *Freedom Movement*, II, p. 224.
- 8 Maori, *Nepaul Frontier*, pp. 5-6; Fisher, 'Indigo Plantations', pp. 55, 232.
- 9 Maori, *Nepaul Frontier*, Ch. 2.
- 10 Fisher, 'Indigo Plantations', Ch. 5.
- 11 Maori, *Nepaul Frontier*, p. 18.
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 GBO, *Champaran Committee Report*, p. 9.
- 14 'An Ex-Civilian', *Life in the Mofussil: or, the Civilian in Lower Bengal*, (2 vols., London 1878), I, pp. 249-51;